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Reconstructing Dewey: habit, embodiment and health and wellbeing

Abstract

This critical paper utilises selective education writings by John Dewey as the basis for considering how a strengths-based and personalised view of habit and embodiment could effectively thrive as part of an enhanced health and wellbeing focus in schools. The paper centres on Dewey's belief that habits when allied to continuity and interaction could help children to integrate experiences in ways which enable them to constructively evaluate the contribution of health and wellbeing to their education. The paper concludes by reviewing how the connections between habit, embodiment and health and wellbeing could be pedagogically strengthened.

Key words: John Dewey, habit, embodiment, health and wellbeing

Introduction

This critical paper reviews the extent to which a selective engagement with Dewey's theorizing can help meet the demands placed on many schools in Anglophone countries to provide a more personalised and integrated perspective on health and wellbeing. These requirements are evident in Scottish curriculum arrangements where every teacher has a more defined responsibility for health and wellbeing and in health promoting schools in New Zealand where closer links between schools, parents and local communities are planned (Clelland, Cushman & Hawkins, 2013; Scottish Government, 2008). In addition, a plethora of localised schemes e.g., walk/run mile a day initiatives to encourage primary age learners (5-11 years) to be more active and alert during the school day have been designed and discussed in the United Kingdom parliament (The Guardian, 2015; UK Active, 2017). However concerns exist about whether these various initiatives might be rather underwhelming in terms of their educational impact. Evaluations of health and wellbeing in Scotland have found that it is often a marginal part of curriculum arrangements (e.g., a series of one-off health awareness days at the end of the school year) rather than something which is more closely incorporated into whole school aims and with policy plans for learners to evaluate their embodied experiences as part of their wider achievements (Education Scotland, 2013, Author, 2017a). Furthermore, fostering personal meaning via health

and wellbeing can be problematic if health messages are presented as a set of fixed (and often unachievable) pathogenic end goals for learners to aspire towards (Quennerstedt, 2008).

Given these challenges, the focus in the paper is on the educational potential of teachers to utilise a perspective on health and wellbeing which is multi-dimensional and holistic in nature, and which encompasses social, psychological and physical dimensions. The potential of a salutogenic-informed theory of health is utilized as a guiding principle, as it is based on considering health as a prerequisite for achieving a range of life goals rather than health as something which you have or have not to varying degrees. The notion of salutogenic thinking for achieving positive life goals is often described as part of a strengths-based approach to health. To date, very few research connections have linked John Dewey's educational thinking with the public health influences underpinning salutogenic thinking (Antonovsky, 1979, 1996). Those which exist e.g., McCuaig, Quennerstedt & Macdonald's (2013) use of a strengths-based approach for guiding health and physical education curriculum change in Australia, is much more focussed on the theorising of Antonovsky than it is on Dewey. Again, Konu & Rimpela's (2002) conceptual development of a whole school approach to wellbeing contains a single quote from Dewey but little by way of a more nuanced Deweyan overview. Therefore, the position adopted in this paper is that there is merit in reviewing how children can learn and grow through effort, reflection and problem solving - in Deweyan terms of becoming fully active and engaged in learning. This is predicated on the belief that Dewey's pragmatism-informed writings resonate with a good deal of contemporary theorizing in education, where thinking is informed by trying to constructively address the educational and social issues confronting society. For as Dewey (1920/1957, p. v/vi) notes, the problems of philosophy 'grow out of the stresses and strains in community life ... and that, accordingly, its specific problems vary with the changes in human

life that are always going on ...'. Thus, while Dewey (1920/1957) praises the reconstructive thinking which has taken place in revolutionising the physical and understanding better the physiological conditions of life, what has yet to take place is the application of ideas about 'what is itself distinctively and basically *human*' (original emphasis retained) (p. ix). Thus, 'the more human mankind becomes, the more civilized it is, the less is there some behaviour which is purely physical and some other purely mental' (Dewey, 1928, p. 7).

In terms of defining and cultivating habits of an integrated character, Dewey (1928, p. 6) considered that 'the habit of regarding the mental and physical as separate things has its roots in regarding them as substances or processes instead of as functions and qualities of action.' Moreover, it is a mistake to think of habits developing accidentally or 'as technical abilities existing apart from our likings' (Dewey, 1922/2012, p. 13). As such, Dewey (1922/2012, p. 14) considered that habits 'furnish us with our working capacities' and highlight the significance of intelligently controlled responses. The potential fissure of considering there to be a separate body *and* mind was in Dewey's (1928, p. 6) view compounded by their being 'no word by which to name mind-body in a unified wholeness of operation.' Consequently when discussing body/mind relations 'we still speak of body and mind and thus unconsciously perpetuate the very division we are striving to deny' (Dewey, 1928, p. 6).

In defining embodiment, Stolz (2015) contends that the bias towards psychological discourses has failed to provide a robust educational account of learning that includes the part embodiment plays in how learners perceive themselves, other people and other things in the world. In this light, Stolz (2015) draws upon phenomenology (particularly Merleau-Ponty) to review how

perceptual experiences can help explain the part embodiment plays in enhancing an holistic and integrated view of learning. For Dewey however embodiment also contained the inhabiting of an inherently social world where embodiment helps in developing habits and in becoming a source of growth for individuals and communities (Aldrich, & Cutchin, 2013). Thus, when Dewey was undertaking rehabilitative exercises to reduce pain, he found that various therapeutic practices highlighted the benefits of mind/body experiences which were continuous rather than separate in nature (Cunningham, 2007). As Shusterman (2008, p. 193) notes, ‘what could be more convincing to a pragmatist philosopher of embodiment than undeniable, enduring practical improvements in somatic functioning and the resultant surge of psychic energy and mood?’

In summary, in investigating and developing an integrated view of habit, embodiment and health and wellbeing, the paper recognises the benefits of reconstructing aspects of Deweyan thinking. This position chimes with Ryan’s (1995) belief that while Dewey’s work can be vague and awkward at times, his writings contain the capacity nevertheless to outline how education can foster personal and societal growth, and be more aspirational and imaginative than the formulaic schooling arrangements which often define children’s learning experiences. Furthermore, the paper recognises that as Dewey’s writing output was so copious - Fesmire (2015) calculates that Dewey’s legacy consists of around 8 million words, housed variously in over six hundred articles and thirty-two books - a selective engagement with specific texts and papers is needed. On this basis, the main arguments advanced derive predominantly from selected papers and three of Dewey’s middle works: *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1916/1980); *Human Nature and*

Conduct (Dewey, 1922/2012) and *Experience and Nature* (Dewey, 1925/2009) when considering:

- the relationship Dewey perceived between habit and embodiment
- educational connections between habit, embodiment and health and wellbeing

Dewey, habit and embodiment

During his early years at the University of Chicago (1894-1905), Dewey was trying to reconcile dualist-driven thinking, where for some educators imposing mental discipline carried a premium while for others learning experiences which were interesting to children was the main priority. Dewey's emerging focus on problem solving enquiry was designed to highlight the effort children need to succeed and of how they should avoid becoming unduly passive or excessively disinterested. Additionally, Dewey was interested in overtaking the limitations of Froebel's endorsement of play, as Dewey considered play to be slightly detached from the central purposes of school life, especially in terms of preparing children for adult life (Author, 2017b). In mapping out this position, Dewey (1896/1973) contrasted how 'it is absurd to suppose a child gets more intellectual or mental discipline when he goes at a matter unwillingly' (p. 423) while also being concerned that 'life is too serious to be degraded to a merely pleasant affair, or reduced to the continual satisfaction of personal interests' (p. 424). For Dewey (1896/1973), a psychology of interest requires learning to be active (dynamic), objective and subjective (emotional) so that an interest is an 'outgoing activity holding within its grasp an intellectual content, and reflecting itself in felt value' (p. 432).

Even though Dewey was reluctant to be too specific about curriculum priorities, his emphasis on learning integration and interest, coincided with his belief that what ‘we want is to have the child come to school with a whole mind and a whole body, and leave school with a fuller mind and an even healthier body’ (Dewey, 1899/2008, p. 80). Later when citing positive schooling examples in *Schools of Tomorrow*, Dewey and Dewey (1915/1980) noted that:

... physical growth is not identical with mental growth but the two coincide in time, and normally the latter is impossible without the former. If we have reference for childhood, our first specific rule is to make sure of a healthy bodily development. Even apart from its intrinsic value as a source of efficient action and of happiness, the proper development of the mind directly depends upon the proper use of the muscles and the senses. (p. 214)

and that:

... modern society realizes that the care and growth of the body are just as important as the development of the mind; more so, for the latter is dependent upon the former, so schools will become places for children to learn to live physically as well as mentally. (p. 317)

These broad intentions were supported by the belief that a balanced education requires regard for active phases where the child has the chance to express himself on the environment (trying) and where the learning environment impacts on the child (undergoing). In *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 146), Dewey states, ‘Experience as trying involves change, but change is a meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it.’ This line of thinking requires noting the significance of the body, as ‘the body is, of necessity a wellspring of energy’ which requires meaningful active experiences in

order to nurture personal growth (Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 147). Without recognition of this point, the neglected body will without knowing how or why become impatient and unruly. This becomes problematic for teachers who are often tasked with emphasising that a ‘premium is put on physical quietude; on silence, on rigid uniformity of posture and movement ... in a context where ... bodily meaning is divorced from the perception of meaning’ (Dewey, 1916/1980, p. 148). To avoid experiences which are mis-educative teachers should construct learning environments during the school day which can effectively lead to higher levels of active engagement (Dewey, 1916).

At the time *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1916/1980) was published, F.M. Alexander was pioneering techniques on how body-related means-whereby thinking could be utilised in order for reflective thinking to be goal directed relative to relying on unconscious senses of embodied feeling. Alexanders’ thinking was underpinned by close observations of the holistic pattern of whole body functioning and of the need to inhibit habitual responses and replace them with a form of improved kinaesthetic thinking (Woolf, 2016). During this period, Dewey (age 57) was troubled by neck and back pains and a colleague at Columbia University recommended meeting Alexander (Cunningham, 2007). Consistent with Dewey’s insistence that most of his philosophical ideas stemmed from experience, Alexanders’ techniques affirmed Dewey’s belief that mind and body experiences were continuous, situated and transactional in nature and that the methods advised for correcting posture embodied the physiology of psychophysical experience. As such, actions such as walking, running and cycling are not the result of purely mental decisions but rely instead on sensitivity and thinking in responding to the environment. In reaching this view, Dewey relied on Alexander for practical support in understanding better how

human movement principles inform integrated body/mind thinking. Dewey's ongoing engagement with Alexander's techniques and methods for example enabled Dewey to see that habits should not be unduly inhibited as this could lead to dualistic thinking. For Dewey, there was no conflict between habit and thought or will - the important distinction is between unaware routine habits and reflective habits which show evidence of intelligence. At this time, Dewey was also influenced by William James's grasp of the continuity of mental and physical experiences (James, 1890). However, further engagement with the emphasis James afforded to the self and to the private nature of consciousness led Dewey to consider that social interaction was pivotal to integrating the cognitive and emotional dimensions of behavioural responses. This was on the basis that will (as established by habits) comprises environmental features that merge inseparable mental and physical means (Woolf, 2016).

Within two years of meeting, Dewey began providing an enthusiastic series of short prefaces and longer introductions to a series of Alexander's texts (Alexander, 1918; 1923; 1931). Moreover in 1916, Dewey gave a series of lectures at Stanford University on the subject of habit in relation to social psychology. These lectures formed the basis of *Human Nature and Conduct* (Dewey, 1922/2012) in which Dewey emphasised how habits begin before an ability to evoke thoughts at will. Therefore, habits are not mere repetitious events but more by way of acquired socially shaped predispositions which enable feeling and judgement to be shown in response to settings, and for will (effort) to connect with deeds. As such, will 'is a *cause* (original emphasis retained) of consequences; it is causation in its personal aspect, the aspect immediately preceding action' (Dewey, 1922/2012, p. 21). Dewey exemplified his thinking on habits through reference to posture by outlining what he considered to be the myth of habit thinking, namely that poor

posture can be corrected by an act of will alone. As Woolf (2016, p. 50) highlights, Dewey was developing an extension of Alexander's 'psycho-physical concepts of habit and will into the mental/moral dimension.' This more wide-ranging notion of habit was predicated on considering that means-ends thinking enabled different outcomes to be achieved. In developing his thinking, Dewey (1922/2012, p. 20) considered that:

... we need a word to express that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; which contains within it a certain ordering of systemization of minor elements of action; which is protective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation; and which is operative in some subdued subordinate form even when not obviously dominating activity. Habit even in its ordinary usage comes nearer to denoting these facts than any other word.

In more biological-related terms, habits were further discussed in *Experience and Nature* (Dewey, 1925/2009) where Dewey explored the nature of man and distinguished between the living and non-living, in that what characterised the needs of the living are 'efforts which are active demands to satisfy needs' (p. 252). On this basis, the term psycho-physical is an appropriate one as it 'denotes the conjunctive presence in activity of need-demand satisfaction' (Dewey, 1925/2009, p. 254). Key to enabling sensitive and discriminatory judgements to be made is organisation as with 'organisation, bias becomes interest and satisfaction a good or value and not a mere satiation of wants or repletion of deficiencies' (Dewey, 1925/2009, p. 256). Therefore, key to distinguishing psycho-physical influences is 'one of levels of increasing complexity and intimacy of interaction among natural events' (Dewey, 1925/2009, p. 261). And key to intimacy of interaction is language communication, as qualities of expressed feelings are

not just felt, but ‘they have and they make *sense* (original emphasis retained); record and prophesy’ (Dewey, 1925/2009, p. 258). For as with language communication, latent qualities and habits can be identified and discriminated between in order to foster intimacy, interaction and personal growth.

Further evidence of Dewey’s commitment towards what in contemporary times would be regarded as a strengths-based approach to health and wellbeing was evident in an essay Dewey wrote for *The New Republic*, an American journal with a focus on social and political matters. The essay titled ‘A Sick World’ highlighted Dewey’s intolerance towards latest health fads and a general unease with finding cures for sickness rather than emphasising healthy living. As Dewey (1923/1983, p. 43) notes, a ‘cured body or mind is in no sense the same thing as a healthy, vitally growing mind or body, any more than a winning a law suit is the same thing as cooperative social relationships’. Dewey, (1923/1983) moves on to indicate that:

... the very idea, of cure indicates that fundamentally evil, trouble still exists; it proves that negative ideas and practices instead of constructive ones still dominate our consciousness. A truly healthy life would indeed ‘prevent’ many troubles but it would occur to no one that its value lay in what it prevented. Such a life would be simple and spontaneous, joy, vigour and achievement. Being better signifies something radically different to having less of a trouble. ... Only education and re-education in normal conditions of growth accommodates anything positive and enduring (p.44).

Woolf (2016) believes that Dewey’s uses ‘A Sick World’ to extend Alexander-related theorising on the societal disadvantages of pursuing flawed health practices. Notably, among these is an

elaboration of Alexander's belief that completing physical exercises without means-whereby thinking is counterproductive as it is founded on a dualist approach to health and welfare. In preference, Dewey (1925/2009) elaborated on the need for a less mechanistic and more coherent and ordered approach where influences between intelligent meaning and qualitative feelings connect with basic needs and relationships, as human learning and habit forming present 'an integration of organic-environmental connections so vastly superior to those of animals without language that its experience appears to be super-organic' (p. 280). However, these new opportunities can come with a certain risk and paradox as new habits often cut across existing old habits. This means that while new emerging sensitivities offer rich opportunities for ways of responding the capacity for error and disappointment also exists. As Dewey (1925/2009, p. 296) states, in 'matters predominantly physical we know that all control depends upon conscious perception of relations obtaining between things' in a context where habitual effects become natural and 'form the platform of development and apprehension of further meanings, affecting every subsequent phase of personal and social life' (p. 302). These sentiments indicate the benefit Dewey perceived in understanding habits better and the potential that improved understanding of habit could play in connecting post dualist body-mind discourses and psycho-physical practice concerns. By way of an everyday and relatively minor example of what this might involve consider a cyclist who decides to hire a bike for city transport. If a good habit of posture, balance and joint alignment are already established, the cyclist would if required adjust the seat height. This is because past cycling experiences have established habits which summon the initiative to make the adjustment required. For those less experienced cyclists it may need the intervention of others more proficient and knowledgeable to indicate how these psycho-physical gains can be achieved. This is because less experienced cyclists are less attuned to the enjoyment

and effectiveness-related (i.e., means-end and need-demand) benefits of posture, balance and joint alignment when cycling.

The next part of the paper considers how habits containing inseparable mental and physical (psycho-physical) elements might be taken forward in contemporary schooling contexts as ‘the fundamental question of body-mind unity ... necessarily invokes health and wellbeing issues’ (Woolf, 2016, p. 54). Moreover, as Boydston (1986) notes, Dewey remained disappointed that some of his critics insufficiently understood and engaged with his endorsement of Alexander’s discoveries and techniques.

Educational connections between habit, embodiment and health and wellbeing

As outlined earlier, policy plans endorsing health and wellbeing as a central feature of curriculum arrangements have yet to become central to everyday schooling arrangements (Author, 2017a). Furthermore, some of the more local initiatives appear to make rather speculative and unsupported claims about the impact of exercise on improving behaviour and concentration (The Guardian, 2015). As it is rather dispiriting that little progress has been made on integrating children’s experiences in ways which help them to evaluate the contribution of health and wellbeing to their education what follows are a series of recommendations/suggestions about how many of the conceptual ideas advanced thus far could plausibly connect with new practices in schools. This position generally reflects Enright’s et al., (2014) view that highlighting problems can become recurring and of limited benefit, and that as such, we ‘need more conversations about innovation rather than intervention, more dialogue around strengths and less around limitations, and more talk about creating and less about

solving' (p. 923). In this light, therefore how can teachers with a remit for health and wellbeing review Deweyan notions of habit and embodiment within their school contexts? Standal and Aggerholm (2016) cite the usefulness of Dewey's emphasis on how thought and actions can help children to merge engagement in activity with problem solving inquiry. The continuous nature of open-ended experience is strengthened when learners possess initiative and are curious to reconstruct their experiences in order to grow further. As experiences proliferate, learners' thoughts and feelings can become part of a repertoire of flexible and suitably sensitised habits which reveal independent thought, critical inquiry, observation, experimentation, foresight, and sympathy for others. This is in contrast to considering that willpower alone will be sufficient to rectify poor habits. In taking this position forward, Dewey in his later related writings on the interrelated principles of continuity and interaction outlines how continuity is a fluid process which needs to connect learners' previous experiences with their current ones so that experiences can be reorganised to add meaning and enhance the capacity to direct future experiences (Dewey, 1938). Interaction focuses on the transaction between the environment and the learner, where objective conditions make up the aims and content of experiences and internal conditions refers to each child's unique mental map of the world. Dewey aimed to engage children in educational experiences (objective conditions) which begin with consideration of their past experiences and perceptions (internal conditions).

To enable learners experiences to be more continuous and interactive, Author and Co-author (2013) consider that experiences which afford significant responsibility and some control over the pace and direction of learning are most likely to develop the levels of reasoning, active deliberation, discernment, and decision-making required. Furthermore, an engagement with

language to aid reflection and discussion is necessary in order that habits can build upon one another to shape ever more complex behaviour. As previously alluded to making this type of integrated connection is less certain when experiences are only a marginal part of curriculum arrangements. Thus, a more meaningful health and wellbeing context requires ensuring that learners' engagement and autonomy are suitably to the fore in planning discussions about how best to cultivate habits and values. Progress in these types of ways can help overtake concerns that the often obligatory nature of learning can make it difficult to measure degrees of engagement and evidence of impact. In terms of identifying personal growth, Dewey discussed dispositions in relations to habit, and highlighted the importance of persistence and that only by keeping 'a running account, can we judge disposition, disentangling its tendency from accidental accompaniments' (Dewey, 1922/2012, p. 22). In effect, learners can become equipped with the capacity to detect tendencies and consequences which prevent 'taking as trivial a habit which is serious' and from over-exaggerating innocent acts and connections (Dewey, 1922/2012, p. 22). This line of Deweyan thinking is similar to that recently advanced by Annas (2011) who considers that thought and concentration are dependent on habituation and practice, and that this is best gained through experiences which contain a clear structure and desirable goals. As Annas (2008, p. 32) describes it 'flow comes not from mindless letting go but from being in control of your activity in the right way.' On this basis, experiences which provide opportunities to foster deliberation and reflection contain the capacity to respond in dynamic rather than predetermined routinized ways. This line of development, where reflection and self-awareness can improve the connection between thought and action, marks a difference with aspects of phenomenological thinking where connections between action and spontaneity are more highly valued and where reflection is often viewed as a potential inhibitor to effective action.

A potential problem with the types of well-intentioned initiatives mentioned at the beginning of the paper is that they fail to convey how the transaction between the learner and their environment will take place, and of how the tendencies and consequences of regular exercise for example should be part of a serious habit, albeit enjoyably experienced. Failure to make this connection results in educationally shallow experiences which are routine, procedural and undemanding in nature. In terms of making pedagogical progress, Annas (2011, p. 81) has by her own admission little to offer the practicing teacher other than sympathy, noting that there is ‘little that can be said to the reluctant soccer player or pianist other than the apparently unhelpful suggestion that as they get better at it they will enjoy it more and find it more rewarding.’ By contrast, Deweyan thinking on problem solving suggests that school programmes need to recognize the importance of teachers possessing high levels of subject knowledge expertise and observational analysis in order to be able to check on whether habits are satisfactory or otherwise. Dewey’s reporting, for example, of his experiences with the Alexander method, suggests that attempts at self-improvement often benefit from the guidance of expert teachers who can help learners to understand themselves better within a broader physical and social context. This could be achieved through reviewing relatively simple matters such as the effectiveness of fundamental movement patterns in practical activities (see earlier bike seat example) through to more complex matters such as whether there is a mismatch between learners’ intentions towards healthy eating and increased exercising relative to the decisions learners subsequently make.

In thinking how to take forward whole school improvements, Konu and Rimpela's (2002) conceptualising led them to tease out notions of 'having', 'loving' 'being' and 'health' where 'having' broadly relates to school conditions, 'loving' to social relationships, 'being' to means for self-fulfilment and 'health' with health status. The thinking in this paper on improving the educational connections between habit, embodiment and health and wellbeing under a salutogenic-related lens suggests that plausible links could be made with each area. This new thinking is certainly required as the brief focus by Konu and Rimpela (2002) on health and health status is predominantly based on deficit-type thinking and objective rubrics for measuring symptoms and illnesses. Furthermore, the relationship between having and school conditions is overly functional and absorbed by organisational matters relative to teasing out in more nuanced terms how the school environment could be improved. The more detailed focus for exemplification at this point however is on loving in relation to social relationships and being in relation to self-fulfilment. This is more helpful, for as Doddington (2014, p. 1264) notes, from a Deweyan perspective personal meaning should not be viewed 'at the expense of participation and community.'

Thus, what are needed are experiences which connect with means-end thinking in a context where health and wellbeing related aspects of embodiment dovetail with learners' intellectual growth and where 'an openness of mind settles into a defined set of inclinations which actively seek occasions for expression and have a controlling influence on later experience' (Fairfield, 2009). For this to happen in areas such as active mile initiatives (The Guardian, 2015; UK Active, 2017) the need is to get beyond mandated rigid and routinized procedures, for as Dewey (1922/2012, p. 31) notes 'habit is the desirable thing and the routine the undesirable thing.'

Author and Co-author (2014) set out a self-check schedule for teachers to consider when learning outdoors with questions based on observing learning and reflecting on pedagogical practices. Engaging with these types of self-check questions might (in relation to the active mile and similar exercise-based initiatives) help connect programme aims with sequential learning episodes where there is a focus on language (log book, reflective journals, record of times taken), personalisation (route chosen, types of terrain, running speed and distance) and shared participation (planning future walking/running routes). In these episodes teachers should constructively engage with the means-end complexities of providing interactive opportunities as evident by the decision-making tasks available to learners and by the level of interest, engagement and positive relationships shown in response. Progress on this basis should go some way towards meeting Doddington's (2014, p. 1264) maxim that 'concerns introduced should be real and puzzles should be genuine if children are to authentically invest themselves in communication.' If effective, embodied habits can become deep-rooted and resistant to other school and societal pressures which may conflict with regular exercising. In addition, engagement with a strengths-based view of health and wellbeing can recognise personal gains alongside whole schools gains. As such, learners are able to appreciate that differentiated running tasks based on variations in age, size, weight and other health variables are helpful in fostering whole class involvement and making a positive benefit to individuals and the wider school ethos in relation to health and wellbeing. So conceived it becomes possible to see how such relatively small adaptations to practice can become part of a wider school agenda which constructively challenges and pushes forward more nuanced and considered conceptions of health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

This critical paper has raised some demanding questions about the extent to which aspects of Dewey's educational thinking might have possibilities for more closely integrating embodiment and habit with health and wellbeing as part of a wider transformative schools agenda. In reviewing this remit, it was argued that Dewey's view of cultivating habits plausibly connects with post dualist body-mind discourses which emphasise the links between education and psycho-physical practice gains. Progress on this basis is considered helpful in advancing arguments about how learners' wholehearted engagement with health and wellbeing could connect more closely with whole school improvement aims, where health and wellbeing is strengths-based and individual rather than normative and outcomes-based. In this climate, new habits can become self-sustaining, leading to embodied attentiveness (Standal & Aggerholm, 2016) and to learners becoming ever more connected with everyday schooling ambitions.

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